

They denounced as slander the suspicion that Kronstadt was preparing to secede from Russia. The Executive Committee spent a whole day talking with them. They left promising that the Kronstadt Soviet would issue a clarification of its resolution.

Indeed, such a clarification appeared the next day in Kronstadt newspapers. Although not entirely satisfactory, it left the door open to the settlement of the conflict. Tseretelli volunteered to go to Kronstadt with another Socialist minister for further negotiations with the local Soviet. They obtained a declaration of obedience to the government from the Kronstadt Bolsheviks and a promise to transfer all their prisoners to an investigation commission appointed by the government. The Kronstadt Soviet was called to an emergency meeting. It ratified the declaration and the crisis seemed to have been liquidated. But the next day a crowd of sailors assembled on Yakor Plaza and passed a resolution demanding that the local Soviet reaffirm it was the sole authority in the fortress. From the Plaza the crowd marched to the Soviet's offices, and the latter nullified, by a new resolution, the decision of the preceding day.

Indignation against the Communists for plunging the fortress into anarchy was mounting in the country. A group of soldiers and officers came to the Tauride Palace from Fort Ino. I was delegated to talk with them. Their spokesman, a non-commissioned artillery officer, said, "We, the garrison of Fort Ino, are a part of the defense of the capital. We disapprove of the anarchistic actions of Kronstadt and are ready to support you."

"What kind of support do you offer us?" I asked.

"If it comes to a showdown," he replied, "you cannot send troops to Kronstadt. But our fort, together with Red Hill, can force Kronstadt to submit." He explained that the heavy artillery of the mainland forts dominated the approaches to the Neva, including Kotlin Island and the surrounding fortifications. "The fellows in Kronstadt know this," he said. "They talk big, but we can call their bluff."

The delegates impressed me as resolute men, and I asked them to call a meeting of the troops at Fort Ino the next day and invite the representatives of the Kronstadt Soviet to discuss their stand. The meeting began at noon in an unusual setting. A flat sandy beach, a grove of pines in the background. Barracks and tents behind the trees, a platform under an old pine, ranges of small hills along the shore, big gun emplacements. The garrison consisted of artillery and engineering units. The infantry division that covered the fort from the land did not attend the meeting; it was stationed several miles away and had its own committee.

Roshal and a few other Kronstadt leaders came in a speedboat. The artilleryman opened the meeting. "We of Fort Ino, with Kron-